

Testimony from Shirley Salas, Tittabawassee River Voice.

May 24, 2005

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honored to find myself here today, representing residents along the Tittabawassee River floodplain in support of the 'homeowners rights' legislation. Prior to last year I was content in my role as mother and grandmother. Like the rest of the silent majority, I voted in all elections and felt I had done my part as a good citizen.

Then I read about a few people living along the Tittabawassee River floodplain who were suing Dow Chemical. Apparently they want Dow to provide lifetime health surveillance for themselves and their families because dioxin might cause them some sort of health problems. The 175+ individuals involved in this lawsuit wanted to add everybody else and call this a class action suit... in which anybody who did not want to be included would have to opt out of the lawsuit in writing. In other words, less than 10% of the people on this floodplain claimed to represent approximately 2,000 residents.

Around the same time I attended a township board meeting for the first time. When I heard some of the strange ideas by people who claim to represent us I was compelled to do something about it. Step one... I started a web log (blog) originally titled Tittabawassee River - One Voice. You will find this blog, renamed Tittabawassee River Voice, at <http://tittabawassee.blogspot.com>.

Around this same time Dow began a series of informational gatherings to explain the dioxin controversy in our backyards. We attended one. We began looking over the piles of reading material arriving in our mail and reading related articles in the newspapers. Some time during this period the DEQ Supplemental Advisory Regarding Part 20 Requirements Applicable to Property Contaminated by Dioxin. (attachment 1) This is what I refer to as 'the facility document.'

After this I met Leonard Heinzman, who was gathering together a group of residents to discuss how we felt about our residences being labeled 'facilities' by the MDEQ. This became the first meeting of our group, also called Tittabawassee River Voice. My 'One Voice' became the voice of many!

We are all people who have lived along the Tittabawassee River floodplain and raised our families here. Frank and I raised six daughters, living in the same house for more than 45 years. We grew a garden in the floodplain and ate the vegetables from it for several years. In the early years we had only springtime floods, but the first time we had a flood in September before the produces was all ripened and picked, we stopped gardening down there. We still, however, eat asparagus we planted along our property line down there.

The thing is... we are healthy. Our grandchildren are healthy. Our neighbors have the same story. Some of them have been here much longer than I. People my age grew up along the floodplain, played in the river and then raised their children here. They now have healthy grandchildren. Does this sound like a 'love canal' to you? Of course it doesn't, because you are logical people.

The fact is that a group of environmental extremists decided to include us in their ongoing battle with Dow Chemical. They considered themselves advisors to the current MDEQ. They convinced people to sue Dow. They convinced DEQ to call our backyards 'facilities.' Our backyard is not a 'facility' and we are pleased that this group of legislators understands that. We strongly urge you to pass this 'homeowners' rights' legislation.

Along with our friend Bill Egerer, founder of Midland Matters, we support sound science and common sense in the decision making process concerning this dilemma that was thrown into our backyards by a few special interest groups.

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